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THE LATIN IN ENGLISH—OR, INTEREST THAT WILL STICK

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Perhaps the most important task that confronts the teacher of Latin today is to convince the high-school student and the public that Latin is pre-eminently practical and worth while and thereby to develop a wholesome interest in the subject. The last decade has seen much done by Latin teachers to bring this condition about, but much remains to be accomplished. The program of publicity adopted at the recent Nashville meeting will do much to stir up thought in a general way, but the battle must be waged and won primarily in the classroom.

Interest in any subject, to be lasting, must be developed by sane methods that strike bottom, so to speak, and that make the work function with real life activity. This must be the aim of Latin teachers, if we expect to win permanent favor with the student and the public. In speaking of some tendencies in modern educational methods, Dr. Eliot, ex-president of Harvard, says that our desire seems to be to find out what the little fellow would rather do and to help him to do this in the most pleasing way possible. Many Latin teachers, I fear, in their great desire to catch the attention of their students and to make the work interesting, have introduced into their classroom activity some things that smack of this tendency and develop interest for the moment only. Building bridges and vineae, organizing Roman Republics, dressing boys in togas, etc., are good, no doubt, but cannot we develop a lively interest and impart a real language power at the same time by using devices of another type? The writer thinks that this can be done, and this article has been written to offer some suggestions along this line.

Some weeks ago in an effort to ascertain whether his students were interested in Latin and, if so, for what reasons, the writer

asked his Caesar class, consisting of fifty-five mature students, to answer, without signing names, the questions, Are you interested in Latin? If so, why? If not, why? The answers convinced him of the correctness of his opinion expressed at the close of the preceding paragraph. Only four answered in the negative, two of these because, as they said, they began the subject too late. Among the many reasons given in the other fifty-one answers two predominated, namely: (1) because it helps one in the mastery of English (46 answers), and (2) because it trains one to think logically and to speak accurately (22 answers). The predominance of the first reason may be due in part to the fact that the teachers of the class had emphasized this phase of the work, believing it to be the most important one, and yet practically all of the present-day devices to develop interest had been used in the class.

The writer believes, therefore, that Mr. Bennett was right in saying that the chief defense for the study of Latin is the increased power it gives one over the resources of the mother-tongue. If this is true, the teacher of Latin should emphasize, more perhaps than he has, this phase of the work. He should lead his pupils to see that every minute spent in translating his Latin, either orally or silently with the reciter, is a very fine type of oral English composition, which English teachers are emphasizing so much today; he should lead his pupils to realize that most of his appreciation of English syntax and sentence structure comes from his careful analysis of the Latin sentence; and, finally, he should introduce into his class instruction such word-study activity as will lead the pupils to see how and why and when 60 per cent of all our English words came from the Latin.

In an effort to do his duty along the last line of work just suggested the writer has used a number of devices in his classroom that have interested his students greatly, and with no little profit, too, he is sure. He offers them below to the readers of the *Journal*, in the hope that they may be suggestive and helpful to teachers of Latin.

WORD-STUDY DEVICES

Device 1.—Have the first-year student in Latin write in the margin of his text opposite each word in the vocabularies, where it

is possible, an English derivative. The English word should have the Latin part in it underlined, as milit-ary. This device not only begins in a definite way the work of tying the English and Latin together, but, by the law of association, it makes the mastery of the Latin vocabulary very much easier. Variety in giving vocabulary reviews may be achieved by taking books from various members of the class and asking what Latin words are suggested by the English derivatives found written in the margins.

Device 2.—Latin students will be surprised to know how many English words are real Latin words which were borrowed whole. At the beginning of the first year's work a few pages in the composition notebook may be set aside for lists of these words, which may be made up by united class effort as the different declensions and conjugations are reached. It may be a better plan to have the students make out lists at the study period as individual work and compare them at the class recitation. The work will produce in the first declension such words as *area*, *camera*, *formula*; in the second, *circus*, *genius*, *odium*; in the third, *axis*, *acumen*, *orator*, and thus all the way through the paradigms of the adjective and verb. Prepositions, pronouns, and adverbs frequently come over into the English without any change of spelling, and these should be included in the lists as they are met in the vocabularies. Judson's *The Latin in English* (Holt, New York, 75 cents) will give the young teacher much help along this and other word-study lines.

Device 3.—Assign to a first- or second-year class the present and participial stems of a verb, as "scribe" and "script," and, after showing all the possible combinations with prefixes, as "pro-scribe," "sub-script," have the class make an alphabetical list of all English derivatives built on these stems, using, if possible, the latest *Webster*, which contains a list of uncommon words below a black line at the bottom of each page. Such participles as are commonly used as adjectives should be counted as words in addition to the verbs from which they are derived. Attention should also be given to combinations where two prefixes appear, as "super-in-scribe," "re-sub-scribe," and these are not always to be found in the dictionary. *Scribo* will yield over two hundred words, while *mitto* and *duco* will be responsible for half a hundred more

each. A complete list of all the possible derivatives built upon a given root cannot be obtained by this plan, for there is no way by which words that are built on two roots, like "aque-duct," may be found when the root in question is the second one. Roots of common nouns or other parts of speech may be assigned for this work. A good way to drive the lesson of this device home is to have several pupils each draw a large tree on a sheet of drawing-paper and place on the trunk a Latin word and as many English derivatives as possible on the limbs. This idea was suggested by Miss Sabin in her Manual for the Latin exhibit. Several of these may be hung on the walls of the classroom for a season. A suggestive list of the possible combinations of the stems and prefixes of *scribo* follows:

scribe	ascribe	script	ascript
circumscribe	conscribe	circumscript	conscript
describe	inscribe	descript	inscript
exscribe	interscribe	exscript	interscript
prescribe	proscribe	postscript	prescript
subscribe	superscribe	proscript	subscript
transcribe	superscript	transcript	

Device 4.—Choose a short chapter in Caesar, or a paragraph from one of Cicero's orations, and have the class underline all of the words upon whose roots English words are built. Only the large *Webster* or *Standard* should be used in this work. After this is done, the proportion of Latin words that yield English derivatives should be computed. This will rarely be less than 50 per cent and it will frequently run as high as 65 or 70 per cent. A few days ago the writer's class in Caesar found that in the sixth chapter of the second book 63 per cent of the words yield one or more English words, some of them more than two hundred, as we had learned from the work of Device 3. The prepositions *ab*, *ex*, *de*, and *ad*, which occur altogether six times in the chapter, were counted as yielding English words, because they appear so often in English words built on a root plus a prepositional prefix. Proper names were not considered, although three of the six that appear in this chapter yield common English names, namely: Caesar, Gaul, and Belgian.

Device 5.—Tear up an old dictionary, preferably one of academic size containing seven or eight hundred pages, and assign from ten to twenty-five sheets to each student in the Latin department. Have the students underline neatly with red ink all of the words that are built on Latin roots, or that are Latin words borrowed whole. In this work words that came to us from the Latin but immediately by way of the French are to be counted as Latin, e.g., “rely,” Fr. *relier*, L. *religare*. These words are quite numerous. The work may be enlarged by having words derived from Greek underlined with black ink, and Anglo-Saxon words with green ink. By taking sufficient time, four or five hundred pages may be worked up in this way, if the department is reasonably large, and it would be well to have these pages bound in book form as a permanent exhibit for the classroom. The binding of such a book, with proper lettering on the back, will cost about \$1.50. If the Latin words only are underlined the title may be “The Latin in English”; otherwise, “The Elements of the English Vocabulary” would be suitable. The writer recently had his classes prepare a volume of this kind with great interest and profit to those who did the work, and it is now an interesting piece of classroom equipment, which always catches the eye of visitors. In counting the words on a large number of pages taken at random, we found that the English words derived from Latin made up about 60 per cent of the whole number. The Anglo-Saxon words numbered about 26 per cent, and the Greek about 7 per cent, leaving about 7 per cent from miscellaneous sources. The “doubting Thomases” in the class, on the faculty, and in the homes of the pupils, are usually converted on seeing the results of this work.

Device 6.—An interesting and profitable thing to know is the proportion of words of Latin origin found in different types of English taken from different periods in the development of the language. For this work a series of short passages, not to exceed fifty or sixty words each, should be carefully chosen and assigned to different members of the third- or fourth-year class. By reference to a standard dictionary the student is supposed to check up the source of each word in his passage by placing “L” over Latin words, “A-S” over native words, “G” over Greek words, etc. When

this is done, the relative proportion of the different elements should be figured out.

There are three standpoints from which the relative importance of these elements should be viewed, as follows: (1) Total number of words. This is not a conclusive way to find the real value of the different elements, because words like "the," "of," "for," etc., occur more frequently than the more important thought-words. And yet this is the way by which most of the figures as to the character of the vocabularies used by various English writers are reached by language critics. It is hardly fair, in estimating the importance of the foreign elements, to say with Emerson, in his *History of the English Language*, p. 126, that 90 per cent and 88 per cent of the words used by Shakespeare and Tennyson respectively are native words. (2) Individual words. By this plan each word is counted only once no matter how often it may occur in a given passage. This places words on the same basis as that on which they are found in the dictionary. (3) Thought-words. Some words are more important than others in conveying the thought of the sentence. These are the words that must appear in a telegram, those that the mind cannot easily supply in an elliptical sentence. The proportion of Latin and native words found in the thought-words of a passage is, therefore, the best evidence of the real importance of these elements in the English vocabulary.

The preamble to the Constitution of the United States is given below worked out in the three ways suggested above. Words in capitals are derived from Latin, while those in small letters are Anglo-Saxon. Underlined words are thought-words.

PREAMBLE to the CONSTITUTION

we, the PEOPLE of the UNITED STATES, in ORDER to FORM a more PERFECT UNION, ESTABLISH JUSTICE, insure DOMESTIC TRANQUILLITY, PROVIDE for the COMMON DEFENSE, PROMOTE the GENERAL welfare, and SECURE the blessings of LIBERTY to ourselves and our POSTERITY, do ORDAIN and ESTABLISH this CONSTITUTION for the UNITED STATES of AMERICA.

(1)		(2)	
Total words.....	56	Total individual words	38
Derived from Latin...	27-48.2 per cent	Derived from Latin...	23-60.5 per cent
Anglo-Saxon.....	29-51.8 per cent	Anglo-Saxon.....	15-39.5 per cent
(3)			
Total thought-words..	31		
Derived from Latin...	27-87 per cent		
Anglo-Saxon.....	4-13 per cent		

The Latin averages here are higher than in the majority of the passages worked over by the writer's students. A general average of the Latin element in all of the passages worked over in the three ways is about as follows: (1) 36 per cent; (2) 53 per cent; (3) 70 per cent.

Device 7.—A very important Latin element in English words is the prepositional prefix. An interesting and profitable work is to have students make alphabetical lists of all English words containing certain of the common Latin prefixes, as *con*, *trans*, *pre*, etc. The student should be careful not to include in his list words that begin with the letters of the prefix but do not contain the prefix. For example, "premier" does not contain the prefix *pre*-. Again, attention should be paid in assigning the prefixes to the euphonic changes that certain prefixes undergo. *Ad*, for example, appears as "ad-," "a-," "ac-," "af-," "ag-," "al-," "an-," "ap-," "ar-," and "as-." Some of these prefixes are found in hundreds of English words. *Con* occurs perhaps 1,800 times, while *ad*, *ex*, *ob*, *pro*, *pre*, *re*, *sub*, and *trans* are found from 300 to 700 times each.

Device 8.—Latin will be appreciated much more if teachers and students of other subjects can be led to see in it a great help in mastering the meaning of the technical terms in those subjects. Scientific men of repute are constantly affirming their belief in the value of classical training, because it produces this result. A postgraduate student in pathology in one of the large universities frequently expressed to the writer his regret at not having had a more thorough training in Latin and Greek in the high school and college. In high-school Latin classes much splendid correlation with other subjects, such as chemistry, physics, physical geography, botany, algebra, geometry, English grammar, etc., may be

effected by having students prepare lists of technical terms in common use in these subjects which are derived from Latin. The lists should be presented, with the etymology clearly shown in each case, to the teachers and classes interested. The work should be done, when possible, by students who are studying the subjects with whose terminology they are working. A report recently prepared by one of the writer's students to present to the chemistry class contained the explanation of eighty-nine technical terms used in that subject. The *Journal* (VIII, 6, 244 ff.; IX, 7, 301 ff.; XI, 1, 33 ff.) has published some practical suggestions along this line by Mason D. Gray.